

# Farming in a New Weather Reality: Farmer Stories from Maine



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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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# Maine Climate and Ag Network

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## Who We Are

The Maine Climate and Agriculture Network was initiated by faculty at the University of Maine to increase communication and coordination among those working on issues related to climate and agriculture. This web site provides an initial portal to some of the climate related activities at the University of Maine, and serves as an invitation to those with an interest in this topic to participate.

The Maine Climate and Agriculture Network is intended to be a transparent and inclusive framework that will represent agricultural concerns and activities in the broader conversations on climate change across campus and with other institutions and agencies within the state and region (e.g., the USDA Northeast Climate Hub).

## Climate and Ag in the News

[Morning Sentinel covers panel discussion on farming in changing weather](#)

[Farming in new weather reality focus of panel discussion](#)

[AP advances panel discussion on farming in new weather reality](#)

[UMaine researchers to receive USDA funds for climate adaption project with UVM](#)



[Wet winter, spring alleviate drought conditions in state](#)

# “Farming in a New Weather Reality”

Farmer Panel Session

Maine Agricultural Trades Show

January 9, 2018

Farming operations represented:

- Sheep & fiber
- Honey bees
- Turf
- Apples
- Mixed vegetables



Perceived Weather $\Delta$	Perceived Impacts
<p>↑ heavy precipitation (4)</p>	<p>↑ soil erosion            ↓ field access            Poor crop establishment</p>
<p>↑ growing season length &amp; GDDs, milder winters (3)</p>	<p>New pests &amp; and parasites            ↑ Lyme disease            ↓ tree death due to freezing            More efficient solar dye process</p>
<p>Cooler, wetter springs (2)</p>	<p>Slow N mineralization            Lamb death &amp; wet wool            Delayed manure spreading</p>
<p>↑ drought (2)</p>	<p>↓ productivity            Altered white grub phenology            ↑ customer demand for drought-tolerant grasses            ↓ pasture regrowth</p>
<p>↑ ice storm frequency (1)</p>	<p>↑ building and fencing damage</p>

# Honey bees



Jennifer Lund

“There is really nothing new in the recent weather that we beekeepers have not seen many times before, including early or late springs and autumn freezes.”

# Turf



Downeast Turf

“Customers are getting concerned about weather and drought, and being more specific about the varieties they want – especially more drought tolerance.”

# Turf

## Rainfall Extremes

- Drought
- Erosion and field access
- Species and variety selection
  - drought tolerance; quick growth for erosion control
- Infrastructure investment
  - irrigation; 4WD harvester



# Apples



“We’ve always felt a little bit smug in Maine that we didn’t have some of these [pests and diseases] problems and now we do.”

# Apples

**More precipitation**

→ Fire blight

- Monitor & watch weather
- Cut out diseased areas



# Mixed Veggies



## Heavy Rains

→ Erosion and field access

- Permanent raised bed system  
new equipment to implement
- Adjusted bed orientation

# Mixed Veggies



“We tried NRCS/SWCD guidance which says, ‘Thou shalt plow on the contour.’ This was disastrous for us!”

# Sheep



“It’s all about infrastructure”

## **Responses reflect unique circumstances**

- Soil type
- Farming system
- Market demands
- Experiences and beliefs
- Skill sets

“Invest in the things that give you options to help you respond.”

# Desired Adaptation Resources

- Assistance investing in infrastructure
  - Grants with cost-sharing
  - Assistance needs to be timely!
- Extension Ag Engineer to help design solutions
- Education about emerging “occupational hazards”
  - Lyme disease

# Participant Feedback

“More conversations like this!  
It didn't get too political – great idea  
to keep it experience-based.”

